station programmes in compliance with the Forest Conservation Law and what is the number of trees planted so far in each of these States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) No large scale deforestation has taken place in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal during 1990. The Central Government have accorded approval for diversion of 1,19,285.5 ha. of forest land in Madhya Pradesh and 1087 ha. of forest land in Himachal Pradesh during 1990 for non-forestry purposes.

(c) Raising of compensatory afforestation in lieu of forest and approved for diversion is one of the main conditions stipulated under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. In case, non-forest land is not available for compensatory afforestation, it is required to be done in degraded forests over double the area diverted. Till October, 1991 compensatory afforestation has been raised over 36,016 ha. in Madhya Pradesh and 2142 ha. in Himachal Pradesh.

Survey of forest area

498. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the satellite survey using remote sensing device has estimated the actual forest cover at 64 million hectares against the recorded forest area of 75 million hectares indicating a loss of forest cover of 11 to 12 million hectares;

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to make the Forest Conservation Act of 1990 more effective with a view to arrest the decline in the forest cover; and

(c) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The recorded forest area of 75 million ha. includes areas like snow covered mountains, alpine pastures, rocky out crops, water bodies and deserts as well. However, the assessment made of actual forest cover using satellite imageries as 64.01 million ha. represents only actual tree cover and does not include the features mentioned above.

(b) and (c) The Government have taken the following steps:—

1. Forest (Conservation) Act was enacted in 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes. The Act has been made more stringent by an amendment of 1988.

2. A Centrally sponsored scheme has been started to help the States to develop infrastructure for protection of forests.

3. Alternative sources of energy are being developed to replace fuel wood in domestic and commercial sectors.

4. Wood is substituted by alternative materials in packaging railway sleepers building construction, furniture etc.

5. Import policy for timber has been liberalised.

6. Fiscal incentives are given to industries for wood substitution.

7. Efforts are being made to control shifting cultivation.

8. Guideline have been issued to State/Union Territory Governments from time to time for protection of forest. Some of these guidelines are as follows:—

(i) To avoid felling of natural forests and where such felling

are inevitable orf restoration of derations, it should be restricted crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to area not exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains.

(ii) To consider banning of felling in the hills above 1,000 metres, at least for some years.

(iii) To identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.

(iv) To set apart 4 per cent of the geographical area as protection area like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserve etc.

(v) Special guidelines have been issued for protection of forests from forest fires.

Development of waste land

499. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the steps taken by Government for the development of waste-land treeplantation, afforestation, reduction of soil erosion, etc., during the last four months;

(b) whether any efforts have been made to involve various State Governments in these programmes;

(c) whether Government have called any meeting of various State Environment Ministers to discuss such issues; and

(d) what are the plans for the future with a view to give an impetus to such aspects of environment protection?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NTAH): (a) and (b) The Wastelands Development Programme including afforestation and tree planting activities, has been implemented with renewed vigour during the last four months, mainly through the State Governments, which have been advised to strengthen the monitoring mechanism and ensure improved results.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) The Wastelands Development Programme is proposed to be greatly expanded during the Eighth Five Year Plan, which is under finalisation.

Felling of trees in Madhya Pradesh

500. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that more than 15000 trees were felled illegally in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh during the last six months;

(b) whether Government are also aware that many gangs of racketeers are active in illegal faling lof trees throughout the State of Madhya Pradesh; and

(c) if so, what action Government propose to take to save the trees from being felled unauthorisedly there?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per reports received from the State Government there is no evidence that many gangs of racketeers are active in illegal felling of trees throughout the State of Madhya Pradesh.